

MINUTES

RILEY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

**Monday, August 9, 2004
7:30 p.m.**

**Courthouse Plaza East
Commission Meeting Room**

Members Present: Jon Larson– Chair
Buck Gehrt – Vice Chair
Lorn Clement
Rebecca Mosier
Dr. Tom Taul

Staff Present: Monty Wedel – Planning Director; Bob Isaac – Planner; Sherie Taylor – Administrative Assistant.

Others Present: 11 interested persons

The minutes of the June 14, 2004 meeting were approved.

The Report of Fees for the months of June and July were approved. The fees collected in June were \$1250 and in July were \$1300.

Discussion of draft amendment to Zoning Regulations regarding commercial and noncommercial wind energy conversion systems.

Monty Wedel stated that there are two areas that need resolved before the amendment can be published for public hearing. The two areas are the height standard and the visual dominance zone concept. He reviewed both areas and then presented ten photos simulating the height and scale of wind towers with familiar things in the landscape. The simulations are not intended to simulate a particular project or the density and spacing of wind towers. He also stated that the wind towers at Montezuma are 298' to the blade tips. The simulation towers are 298' to the hub with the total height being 399' to the blade tips.

Lorn Clement stated that because of the cloudy day when the pictures were taken, the towers blend into the background too much He felt this was misleading as to how visible the towers will be. He also felt the turbines should be shown with the blades rotating to be more accurate.

Dennis Gross, Geary County resident, asked who will pay for upgrading the roads and bridges in order to bring equipment to a site. Jon Larson answered that the developer will pay for those costs.

Lee Rucker, Riley County resident, asked if the simulated photos would be made available to the public. Wedel stated that a display board will be in the County office building lobby, the library, the mall and at K-State.

Michael Stubbs, Wabaunsee County resident, felt the photos should be doctored to compensate for the cloudy day in order to give a more accurate depiction of the impact of the towers. He stated that he has seen simulations of the towers in Europe that showed the towers rotating. They were all rotating at a different rotation which made the landscape around them appear to be spinning.

Margaret Stert, Geary County resident, felt the simulations should be kept from the public and only be used for the Planning Board's deliberation on writing the wind farm regulations. She said she had recently driven through Iowa and the 150' towers there really stood out against the surrounding landscape.

Alan Clark, Riley County resident, said he was in Colorado recently and noticed huge white electric line towers that he had never noticed before because he wasn't focusing in on them. He thought people would not even notice the wind towers once they got used to seeing them in the landscape. He also said the noise they create is quieter than a vehicle driving by.

Jan Linck, Geary County resident, stated she had been a Riley County resident for 13 years and was also concerned about the simulations being inaccurate due to the towers blending into the clouds. She also stated that once the towers are put up in the Flint Hills, the landscape would be ruined forever and questioned if the Flint Hills are not worth more than the \$800 it is costing for the simulations. She felt the County should find money to get an accurate simulation.

Buck Gehrt said that 48% of the water is consumed by power plants and 43% of the pollutant in the air is from coal. Wind towers could lessen these percentages. He felt the public should be educated as to why wind energy is needed. He also stated that no one noticed the 500' cellular tower in the wind tower simulation photos.

Lorn Clement stated that it was because the cellular tower is thin versus the wind tower which is wider.

Chairman Larson stated that it might appear that the County is trying to prevent wind energy from coming into Riley County by restricting the height. He felt that if a wind turbine taller than 400' could be erected and lessen the number of shorter wind turbines, then the height should not be restricted.

Buck Gehrt agreed.

Lorn Clement stated that industrial scaled turbines should be banned from the County.

Wedel reviewed the current wording of the height standard with the Board and explained that the height standard cannot be varied from except by amendment of the regulations.

Lorn Clement moved to keep the height restrictions as they are in the proposed regulations.

Dr. Taul seconded. The motion carried 3-2.

The visual dominance zone was then discussed. Wedel stated that the dominance zone would be used to determine the area in which the developer will be required to submit an opinion from an appraiser as to the impact of a project on property values of existing residential uses.

After the Board briefly discussed the distance to be used for the visual dominance zone, Buck Gehrt moved to approved the visual dominance zone definition with the distance at twenty times the tower height.

Becky Mosier seconded. The motion carried 4-1.

Brian Anderson, Geary County resident, asked if a circle could be placed at the outer tips of the blades in the simulation photos to give people an idea of the area where the blades would be rotating.

Bob Isaac thought it would be possible.

Dick Seaton, Riley County resident, felt if the simulations were shown to the public, it needed to be clarified that the simulations are only being used to demonstrate the height and scale of the turbines.

Buck Gehrt moved to direct staff to publish the public hearing for the amendment to the zoning regulations for Wind Energy Conversions Systems for the September Planning Board meeting.

Dr. Taul seconded. The motion carried 5-0.

Update on Joint Land Use Study (JLUS)

Wedel stated that the public forums would be held August 21st and 22nd at 7:00 PM with the location yet to be determined. He said the Planning Board would be notified. The website is also about to be launched and the Planning Board will be informed when it becomes available.

Update on Riley County Comprehensive Plan.

Wedel stated that progress had been made on this project since the last meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.